

Conducting Meaningful Public Participation



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Definition of Public Participation



Public Participation is any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public input to make decisions.”

(International Association of Public Participation)





Meaningful Public Participation ...

- Improves decisions and leads to sustainable solutions over the long-term by:
 - Bringing the public's issues into the process
 - Providing an open and clear process for how we as regulatory staff and the public communicate, as well as how decisions get made
 - Creating a dialogue so that problems are identified and can be assessed as part of the solution
 - Facilitating understanding and good dialogue
 - Most importantly, it builds trust and creditability!



Increasing Level of Public Impact ----->

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Keep Public Informed	Listen and Provide Feedback	Ensure public issues are reflected in the decision	Public advise and solutions incorporated into decisions to the maximum extent possible	Implement what public decides
Fact Sheets Web Sites	Public Meetings Surveys Focus Groups	Workshops Polling	Citizen Advisory Committees Consensus-building	Ballots Delegated Decisions



Building Trust

- To create trust and creditability, we must:
 - Build relationships.
 - Listen to stakeholders.
 - Decide together what specific actions can demonstrate good faith (involve citizens early and often).
 - Keep the decision making process clear.
 - Don't demand trust as a prerequisite. Accept a lack of faith (based on history, other experiences due to the fact that you are an regulatory employee).



Building Trust (Cont'd)

- If it looks like we are packaging something with a veneer of honesty, talking over their head with jargon or not listening to their concerns – we will be perceived as “blowing smoke.”
- Provide information in plain language.
- Acting trustworthy is no guarantee that people will ultimately trust you, but if you fail to be credible, you will guarantee community opposition.

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Collaboration: What Does It Really Mean?

“A mutually beneficial well defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations/groups/individuals to achieve common goals.”

(Amerst H. Wilder Foundation)

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Group Relationships

- Involvement
- Commitment
- Resources (time, money)
- Collaborating
- Cooperating
- Coordinating
- Networking

(Turning Point Collaborative Leadership)



Fundamental Concepts

- Networking – Exchanging information for mutual benefit.
- Coordinating – Networking and altering activities to achieve a common purpose.
- Cooperating – Coordinating and sharing or pooling resources.
- Collaborating – Cooperating and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit to achieve a common purpose.
- Competing – Exchanging some amount of information, but not “proprietary” information; altering activities to meet own needs; sharing resources minimally or with a “hidden agenda.”

A Product of Turning Point



Why Collaborate?

- Shared concern
- Pool Power
- Overcome gridlock
- Add diversity
- Increase ability to handle complex issues

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Collaboration Requires:

- Leadership
- Stakeholders
- Ability to identify problems
- Community capacity

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Barriers to Collaboration

- Ego
- Deference
- Giving up control and power
- Lack of courage
- Traditional “leadership” tactics

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Keys to Successful Collaboration

- Good timing
- Strong stakeholder group
- Board-based involvement
- Overcoming mistrust
- Clear need
- Credibility
- Open process (transparency)
- Sustainable over time



Good Public Participation Behaviors

■ **Willingness**

- To put forth effort; takes work and conscious effort/attention/follow-up

■ **Openness**

- Toward all others' points of view, interests, concerns and needs

■ **Validation**

- Of each individual's experience and values



Good Public Participation Behaviors (Cont'd)

■ **Respect**

- For individuals, for their experience, points of view, emotions, and needs

■ **Humility**

- In order to suspend judgment, assumptions, and take the attitude of a learner

■ **Mutuality**

- To approach problems as colleagues or allies to understand issues and solve problems



The Challenges of Public Participation

Although the principles are constant,
the situations vary so much that you
can't have a cookie cutter approach.

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Remember to...

1. Plan for effective public participation.
2. Involve the public early.
3. Communicate with the public on a frequent basis.
4. Let the public have a say in ways to communicate with them.
5. Let the public know that you want their input and how their input will impact the decision.
6. Be upfront and honest.